

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization for accommodating at least an endoscope and performing high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization, comprising:

an accommodating recess section ~~for accommodating an elongated insertion part of the endoscope having~~ formed so as to accommodate a flexible section of the endoscope; and

pressing force preventing means for preventing pressing forces from being ~~applied to~~ concentrated and applied to at least one locus portion of an outer surface of the flexible section when accommodated in the accommodating recess section.

2. (Previously Presented) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein the pressing force preventing means includes a lid member provided with respect to the accommodating recess section wherein the insertion part of the endoscope is accommodated, the lid member covering the accommodating recess section such that the pressing forces are not applied to the outer surface of the flexible section.

3. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 2, wherein the lid member ~~is capable of separating~~ has a space to place the insertion part of the endoscope so as to be separated from peripheral elements of the endoscope.

4. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 3, wherein the lid member ~~is capable of positioning~~ has a space to place the peripheral elements of the endoscope on a first side of the lid opposite to a

second side of the lid corresponding to the accommodating recess section, when the lid is closed against the accommodating recess section.

5. (Previously Presented) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 3, wherein the lid member is provided with a restricting member which surrounds and restricts the insertion part to a predetermined shape on a first side of the lid opposite to a second side facing the accommodating recess section, when the lid is closed against the accommodating recess section.

6. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 2, wherein the lid member is formed with a cutaway section at a location corresponding to ~~through which~~ a bend operating knob provided on an operating part of the endoscope ~~can project, after~~ when the endoscope is accommodated in the recess section.

7. (Previously Presented) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein the pressing force preventing means includes a flexible restricting member which deforms under a provided external pressure, in the accommodating recess section.

8. (Previously Presented) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 7, wherein the flexible restricting member surrounds and restricts the insertion part of the endoscope to a predetermined shape and is provided to the lid member.

9. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein the pressing force preventing means comprises a protecting cylindrical body[[,]] that can be subject to high-temperature and high-pressure steam sterilization, ~~having an internal diameter that is greater than the external form of the insertion part of the endoscope~~ the protecting cylindrical body being accommodated in a case of the vessel in the state of having accommodated the flexible part of the endoscope.

10. (Original) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein the accommodating recess section is formed by a restricting member which surrounds and restricts the insertion part of the endoscope to a predetermined shape, the restricting member defining a clearance with respect to the insertion part.

11. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein ~~the pressing force preventing means includes a restricting member which prevents~~ the accommodating recess section is formed so as to prevent predetermined portions of the insertion part of the endoscope from contacting or overlapping with other portions of the endoscope.

12. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein the pressing force preventing means includes a flexible restricting member which ~~restricts~~ is provided in the accommodating recess, the flexible restricting member restricting the insertion part of the endoscope to a predetermined shape and ~~which deforms~~ deforming to a greater extent than the insertion part in response to a predetermined external force.

13. (Currently Amended) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 1, wherein the pressing force preventing means includes substantially planar faces which are formed on a portion of the accommodating recess section contacting the insertion part of the endoscope.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Canceled)

16. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 2, further comprising an outer lid that closes from above the lid member after the lid member covers the accommodating recess section.

17. (New) A vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization for accommodating at least an endoscope, comprising;

a tray;

an accommodating recess section formed in the tray to accommodate a flexible section of the endoscope;

a protecting section for protecting the flexible section of the endoscope from pressing forces being concentrated and applied to at least one locus portion of the flexible section accommodated in the accommodating recess section.

18. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 17, wherein the protecting section includes substantially smooth faces consecutively formed at portions which come in contact with the flexible section in the

longitudinal direction of the flexible section when the flexible section is accommodated in the accommodating recess section.

19. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 18, wherein the accommodating recess section is formed such as to provide a clearance between the flexible section and the accommodating recess section in the state of having accommodated the flexible section.

20. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 17, wherein the protecting section includes a flexible restricting member which is provided in the accommodating recess such as to determine the position to accommodate the flexible section, the flexible restricting member deforming to a greater extent than the insertion part in response to a predetermined external force.

21. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 17, wherein the protecting section comprises a protecting cylindrical body that has resistance against high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization, the protecting cylindrical body being accommodated in the vessel in the state of having accommodated the flexible part of the endoscope.

22. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 17, wherein the protecting section comprises a lid member which covers the accommodating recess station, the lid member having a portion for placing accessories of the endoscope separate from the endoscope.

23. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure steam sterilization according to claim 17, wherein the protecting section comprises a lid member which covers the accommodating recess section, the lid member having a portion for placing the insertion part of the endoscope on a first side of the lid member opposite to a second side of the lid member facing the accommodating recess section when the lid member covers the accommodating recess section.

24. (New) The vessel for high-temperature high-pressure team sterilization according to claim 23, further comprising an outer lid which covers the lid member when the lid member covers the accommodating recess section.